WESTERN ASIA

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RECTORIAL ADDRESS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 318th ANNIVERSARY OF THE LEYDEN UNIVERSITY, 8th FEBRUARY 1893,

BY

C. P. TIELE,

Prof. of Comparative Theology.

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TRANSLATED BY ELIZABETH J. TAYLOR.

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WESTERN ASIA, ACCORDING TO THE MOST RECENT DISCOVERIES.

Rectorial Address by Professor Tiele on the occasion of the 318th Anniversary of the Leyden University, 8th February, 1893.

GENTLEMEN,

It is with pleasure that I greet you in this room so bare and cheerless, but endeared to us none the less by many happy memories.

Our Eighth of February is no longer what it was once, the opening day of the Academical year, yet we hold it in honour. The Rector is not called upon by the law to speak to-day, but he willingly complies with the request of his colleagues.

Although it is a feast day for us, still you will not expect me to deliver a festival speech nor to sing the praises of our School and to expatiate upon its greatness. That is all very well on special occasions and was suitable in the year 1874, when our University celebrated her Tercentenary and the deep lamented Matthias de Vries delivered his brilliant

discourse "De Academia Lugduno—Batava libertatis præsidio," which we older men remember so vividly; it was equally suitable in the great jubilee year of 1875, but an annual repetition would become monotonous. I shall therefore not undertake it. Neither shall I tell you what I feel concerning our Higher Education, nor seek to find whether its present direction leads to the high goal, which should be its object and whether it does what it might and therefore should do. Why build castles in the air? why give utterance to wishes that cannot be fulfilled in the near future and may possibly never be? Why make complaints for which we have neither ear nor heart in the midst of our reform-bill-fever?

I prefer taking advantage of the liberty allowed me and choose, as have done my predecessors, a subject from amongst the studies which I pursue and in which I hope to awaken your interest. Will you go back with me to thirty centuries before the founding of our High School, to the latter years of the 15th and the earlier ones of the 14th centuries before Christ?

"Western Asia, according to the most recent discoveries," that is what I shall endeavour to sketch in outline.

The discovery, to which I would draw your attention, is one of the most important concerning ancient history, which has been made of late years and no doubt many of you are already acquainted with it. In the beginning of the winter of 1887 some Fellahs

found amongst the ruins of the residence of the Egyptian king, Amenothes IV, several small tablets of baked clay, of different sorts and colours, all inscribed with the well-known Babylonian cuneiform characters. Fortunately they have not been too widely dispersed; more than 300 are carefully preserved in the Berlin, London and Bulaq Museums. Only a few became the property of private scholars, two of whom, one the celebrated Egyptiologist Maspero and the other the learned Russian Golenisheff, placed theirs at the disposal of the Berlin publishers. They are now all published, in so far that they belong to public collections, and are therefore accessible to all those who understand the language, but are unable to go and study the original documents.

Of course, some scholars who could obtain access to them before the publication, were not long in making known the—rather premature—result of their researches. So, the mystery how could tablets written in the Babylonian cuneiform characters be found in an Egyptian ruin, was soon cleared up and it was evident that we had become possessed of a priceless treasure—nothing less than the diplomatic archives belonging to Amenothes IV and his father Amenothes III, and a collection of letters to the Pharaoh from friendly kings of the countries bordering the Euphrates and the Tigris and from the petty kings and governors of Syria, Phoenicia and Canaan. A few only are written in an unknown tongue; the others are all written in the so-called Assyrian language—the

language of Babylon and Ashur. The Egyptian king himself uses it in writing to his royal brother at Babylon. This proves that there must have been at his court men acquainted with the Babylonian language, and some mythological texts, found amongst the letters, must have been employed for the study thereof. For it was only in a few instances that the embassies of the foreign sovereigns had an interpreter,—targumannu—a word which we still recognise in the word dragoman, and which is mentioned in one of the letters—attached to them.

We can entertain no doubt as to the tablets being genuine. The peculiarities of the characters and the language as well as the contents of the letters exclude all idea of a forgery. Their preservation is due to the fact that the residence of Amenothes IV was deserted very soon after his death and was later on shunned by all, as having been the dwelling place of a heretic.

I have mentioned the sources from which I have drawn and cannot now enlarge upon all that has been written on these documents.

As soon as we became acquainted with the contents of the letters, I read a brief report of them, before the Royal Academy at Amsterdam, and I tried to show their vast importance to history. Since that time not a little progress has been made. With full recognition of my indebtedness to various learned writers, I now proceed to go my own way.

The great, the overwhelming fact, which im-

mediately calls for attention and of which mention is frequently made is this—that the diplomatic correspondence between the king of Egypt and his allies and vassals was not carried on in the language of the rulers, nor yet, with few exceptions, in that of the friendly states and dependent provinces, but in that of Babylon and Ashur, and in a system of writing too, originally intended for totally different idioms and which on account of its prolixity and difficulty was hardly suited for diplomatic and official correspondence. What does this indicate? Not that the more used Arameian—Phœnician alphabet was not yet invented, but that the use of it was less general than later on.

Yet another question: How is it that the language of Ancient Babylon—for Assyria as a power was only in her infancy and unable to exercise any influence—became the official court language in the whole of Western Asia? and how did this become so deep-rooted that the Egyptians themselves do not appear to have made any effort to replace it by any other? At the time of which we speak, Babylon was of small importance; her government was confined to the low-lying lands on the Euphrates and the Tigris and was even ruled by a Kassite dynasty. Two things are just possible: either many centuries earlier Babylon must have governed as far as the Mediterranean; or as the well-known seat of ancient civilization and as the great trading centre she must have exercised a moral influence over the less advanced

peoples of Anterior Asia, and induced them to master the Babylonian language and writing, as being more advantageous to their own mercantile interests.

The first supposition, upon which I have always laid much stress, appears to me the more probable of the two; for generally speaking, an official language is imposed by the stronger power. Nor had the Babylonians forgotten their former greatness and power as is proved by the history of the conquests of their oldest kings; a history, which is now shown to be neither vain-glorious nor legendary.

In support of the other theory we may say that the Elamites and the Persians chose the Babylonian type for their model, that the old Armenians began by accepting the Assyrian in its entirety and only later on did they modify it—that is the writing, not the language. We might mention French—a universal language, and France did not conquer the world to make it so.

But we cannot compare the intercourse of European Christians in later times with that of the Semitic states fourteen centuries before Christ. We have a better example in Latin, the language of courts and diplomatists in Europe in the middle ages, because it was the language of the old Roman empire. I thus incline to my first hypothesis.

Meanwhile, in whatever way we explain the wonderful fact, we shall always have a decided proof both of Babylon's former power over her Western

neighbours, whether physical or moral, and of the superiority of her civilization, the antiquity of which, is known to us from other sources.

This brings us to the date of our letters; I use the word date figuratively, for sad to say the dates are missing, so that it is difficult in many instances to place the documents in consecutive order.

I will begin by drawing an outline of the political situation. Egypt, in former days, Babylon's rival in progress, had during the last two centuries, after a great deal of oppression, raised her head and not content with driving back her conquerors to Asia, had since the time of Thotmes I revenged herself repeatedly by glorious victories. She had added to her kingdom the states of Canaan and Phœnicia and some of the Aramœan states, and ruled, as suzerain, as far as the Euphrates, holding in subjection the smaller powers on the further bank of the river. But it was not a peaceful possession; there were repeated insurrections to be quelled.

At the time that Amenothes III ascended the throne of his ancestors, however, order and quiet had been restored and during his long reign he was able to lay aside his arms and travel peacefully through the subjugated countries and go as far as the borders of the Euphrates to shoot elephants. In the days of his prosperity he was on terms of friendship with the neighbouring sovereigns, the powerful king of the Ḫatti in the North of Syria and with the kings of Mesopotamia on the opposite side of the river.

At his death all concur in praising the generosity with which he always distributed large gifts of gold in return for the presents sent to him and he is held up as a pattern to his successor.

Thus, Tuschratta, king of Mitani wrote to Amenothes IV, "Never did Nimmuriya, your father, break his promises—I have mourned for him deeply and when he died, I wished to die myself!—May he, whom I loved, live with God!"

The kings of these countries call the king of Egypt their brother and each speaks of himself moreover as sharru rabû, "the great king." Still it is very palpable that they recognise the superiority of the latter, and should they forget it, His Majesty, the Son of the Sun, reminds them of it. A noteworthy example of this is found in the correspondence of Amenothes III with a hitherto unknown king of Babylon—a Semite—his brother-in-law. Amenothes was married to the sister of the latter and now requested the hand of his daughter in marriage and the Babylonian raised difficulties, saying that for many years he had had no tidings of his sister and would like to know whether she were still alive and well? It is quite true that his ambassadors saw a lady at the king's palace, supposed to be the Babylonian princess, but nobody had recognised her. Besides which, it appears that Thotmes IV, father of Amenothes, had not fulfilled the promises made at the time of the first marriage; he wants to have some security—and then he has other grievances: he does not consider that

his presents to Egypt have been sufficiently appreciated. The neighbouring kings, who have asked for his daughters in marriage have behaved so differently! Amenothes tries to smoothe over these difficulties; the envoys, who did not recognise the princess, were young men; let his brother send an old servant, he would know her at once. Of course all the other complaints are imaginary, and those facts which cannot be denied are put down to the want of tact or to dishonesty of the envoys, much in the same way as is done now-a-days. He will make up for his father's short-comings and, if petty Mesopotamian kings make such handsome presents, then nothing less can be expected from a great king.

The wily Babylonian has no intention of refusing, and only wants to make advantageous conditions and sets forth a new claim. Very well! he will give his little daughter (suḫarti) but in exchange he would like to have a daughter of Amenothes for his wife.

This is too much for the proud Egyptian! "The daughters of an Egyptian king cannot be given to anybody!" that is, to anybody out of Egypt. Asiatic princesses might consider it an honour to be taken to the court of Thebes, but Egyptian princesses ranked too high to occupy a secondary place at an Asiatic Court.

Rish-Kulimma-Sin, this is the name of the king of Babylon, feels that he has gone too far; but he does not lose hope yet; in a flattering letter to his brother in Egypt he says: "If it cannot be a princess, send me

some other Egyptian lady; nobody here need know that she is not a princess." You see, that if he is considered to be the son-in-law of the king of Egypt by his own people and by the neighbouring states, he will be content and his ambition will be satisfied; and this he insists upon. If Amenothes should refuse, even should he send 3000 talents of gold, they would not be accepted and the daughter of the Babylonian king shall not be given to him. Whether this wish was fulfilled remains doubtful. It is not until five years later that negotiations are renewed and Princess Irtabi goes to Egypt after her father had received 30 manehs of gold as her dowry. But in the letter of thanks for this gift, no further mention is made of an Egyptian lady. He does not seem to have belied his character of first merchant of the old city of Babylon, but he had simply asked somewhat too much.

The relationship between the house of Mitani and that of Egypt was closer—Thotmes IV and Amenothes III had already intermarried with princesses of that house, the latter with the sister of the then reigning sovereign of Mitani, Tushratta, who hastens to inform his brother-in-law of his ascent to the throne. The young king felt much flattered, when in reply to this announcement the old king made another offer of marriage; he did not try to hide the pleasure he felt and was very pleased to hear that the Egyptian envoy considered the young princess very pretty and fascinating, and he at once begins to settle the terms of the

contract. Between parenthesis I will just mention that all the Asiatic kings were of opinion that gold was as plentiful as sand in Egypt. It is worthy of notice that the gifts sent to Egypt always consisted of precious stones, copper, horses and carriages, slaves, women and works of art and in return they usually expected and received stamped measures of gold. Therefore Tushratta asks for much gold to pay for the implements of war and of the chase which his brother-in-law wants and also for the dowry of his daughter. As soon as he feels sure about it, he will send his daughter and both countries will rejoice; this is what eventually takes place; in the 4th month of the 36th and probably the last year of the old king's reign, the beautiful Mitanian princess reaches Egypt, not indeed to become the bride of the dying father, but of his son and successor. It is satisfactory to know that, in spite of all the bargaining that had taken place, the young king was solicitous for the welfare of his daughter. He asks the king to take under his protection the goddess who is to be her guardian and at the same time he writes a friendly letter to the queen, the mistress of Egypt, endeavouring to secure a kindly reception for his child.

In the early years of his reign Amenothes III was on good terms with his Eastern neighbours and he had but little trouble with the Ḫatti, and was at peace with the dependent states. It is true that in the latter part of his reign a spirit of rebellion was

fermenting amongst the people, but it never came to open warfare.

The reins of the government had not long been in the hands of Amenothes IV, "Naphuriya" (Nebhopr-Rê) of the letters, when disturbances began. The Mesopotamian kings had all written to him at the time of his accession to the throne and expressed the hope that the good feeling, which had existed between their fathers and themselves and the father of the new Egyptian king might continue; they all seemed disposed to renew the old bonds of friendship. Even the king of the Hatti writes in this spirit and sends a gift, but for prudence' sake one of small value. Still, at that time, not even he had any intention of making use of the change of government to increase his own power at the expense of the new king; nevertheless the latter did not come up to his expectations. Before long the letters of his Eastern brothers are full of complaints; firstly about his niggardliness. They have all sworn in the temple, and no doubt in the presence of the Egyptian envoys, to observe their allegiance to the king. But they receive nothing, or as good as nothing. Burraburiyas, who had asked for the hand of the Egyptian king's daughter for his son and had sent rich bridal gifts for his future daughter-in-law,—he even gives a list of the most remarkable and of those which are most worthy—complains that the Egyptian envoys have visited his country three times without bringing any presents, so he presumes that they must have kept

for themselves the gold that was entrusted to their care.

At last they arrive with two manehs of gold, part of which is of such bad quality that he refuses to accept it; there can be no supervision in Egypt and the king there does not see that the weighing and stamping are properly executed. "If you cannot send as much as your father, then send half as much!" thus writes the Assyrian, reminding him at the same time that his father had received twenty talents of gold from Amenothes III. I will spare you further instances.

But there were other grievances than that of the parsimony of the king. They refer to the disorders and anarchy reigning in the dependencies of Asia. He might perhaps not know that the Assyrian envoys had been captured and robbed by wandering tribes of Mesopotamia; but the Babylonian king was right in complaining that his ambassadors had been plundered and shamefully treated by Egyptian vassals; and he urgently demands for indemnification, punishment of the offenders and immediate surrender of his unfortunate subjects.

No wonder that the tone of the letters now alters. The old forms of civility are still used, with assurances of faith to keep the obligations that they have undertaken and the usual formula: "Whatever my brother may wish for, let him say it and it shall be sent to him." But the contents of some of the letters are far from agreeing with these

words, and one is especially remarkable. At last Burraburiyash has declined to receive the Egyptian envoys; he will not have them in his presence. And how does he now answer the remarks made about his behaviour by the Egyptian king? With all sorts of subterfuges, in a letter, which savours rather of ridicule. He has been ill all this time, that is why he was unable to receive his brother's envoys at his table—and in reality, it is he, who is the aggrieved one. Could not Amenothes have sent a word of sympathy and have enquired after his brother's health? His anger was now appeased, for he was told that the distance between his country and Egypt was so great, that probably the king had not heard of his illness. This is the way in which the old Babylonian king makes fun of his young brother, for he was very accurately informed of the distance between the two countries. However, to break off all negotiations with Egypt would not have suited him —it would have interfered with Commerce, "that is, with what Babylon and its king then valued most." The young Egyptian monarch would not have minded: "In your country nothing is wanting; in my country I am deprived of nothing." The treasures of Babylon did not appeal to him; his heart was set upon very different matters, as we shall see. But the king of Babylon did not wish to drive things too far. The happy connection of old times must be resumed and the only means to attain this end was by sending a few costly presents to Egypt in the hopes of receiving

some Egyptian gold. He carries out this plan, but with caution; the well-known parsimony of the new Pharaoh makes it advisable not to risk too much. Five span of horses and four manehs of lapis-lazuli—that was all that he actually sent—but they were accompanied by very great promises. He excused himself for not sending more, owing to the heat, as the roads were badly provided with water; but as soon as ever the weather was more favorable, further gifts should follow. We have every reason to suppose that Burraburiyash had to comfort himself with this small loss and that he was not called upon to equip another caravan.

Thus it is that Egypt began to lose importance in the eyes of her Eastern neighbours; but in the dependent Western territories the king's niggardliness and his inefficiency in the government of his kingdom bore fatal fruit! Confusion, bloodshed, disorder increased daily. I will not speak here of the incessant strifes between petty princes, who like the "knightly robbers" of the middle ages, seized upon every opportunity to invade one another's territories, although it shows us that Egypt was incapable of maintaining peace in the country. There was a greater danger. Some of the governors point to the position taken up by the king of the Hatti and fear alike for the consequences to Mitani and to Alashya. "As regards the said king", it is evident that he has taken up arms and has conquered a part of Syria, the city of Tunip. Tunip, not very far from

the present town of Aleppo, had been ever since the time of Amenothes IV's great-grandfather, one of the most loyal of the conquered provinces and had even accepted the Egyptian form of worship. But all this was of no avail. Amongst the documents is found a pathetic letter from the inhabitants of the city, wherein they piteously implore for help, adding that they have already done so twenty times. Then they were fearing an invasion on the other hand, from the governor of the land of the Amorites, who later on did actually wrest the country from the king of the Ḫatti; but the king sent them no assistance against either enemy; on the contrary, he detained in Egypt the very man whom they wanted to have at their head.

The king maintained this behaviour towards the governor of the Amorites for some time and this governor is one of the principal persons to whom I wish to draw your attention. Properly speaking I should say that I wish to refer to two important persons: Abd-Ashirti and Aziru—father and son—both regents over the whole country of the Amorites under the Egyptian governor; the former, who had incited the people to rebel during the previous reign, now appears to have let his son take a more prominent part. They agree, however, in policy and both are striving towards the same goal. To all outward appearances, they acknowledge the authority of the Egyptian king; the letters, written by them to the king or to his ministers are full of expressions

of submission and obedience. The numerous complaints against both father and son, which are repeated with sad monotony in various despatches from the other governors, testify to the insincerity of their protestations.

One city after another, towns under immediate Egyptian protection, others governed by inland princes, or by Egyptian governors, were taken possession of and the chiefs put to death. Districts lying further to the East felt themselves between two fires; on the one side were the Amorites, on the other the Hittites, who it is true were fighting against each other, but just on that account laid waste the king's country by fire and sword.

For a long time all complaints were fruitless; "money and troops!" that was the ever-recurring cry! But Amenothes had no gold, or if he had, he kept it for holier things than for the power and greatness of his kingdom; and he could not muster troops, or if he did, they were much too weak to crush a powerful enemy. Now the situation becomes desperate. Rib-Adda, the governor of Byblos, stands alone; his people, his nearest relations incite him to desert his king. If no help comes he will have to take to flight and deliver up the city.

At last they appear to have taken heed in Egypt. When it became apparent that Dudu, the Egyptian governor was unable to put a stop to the arbitrary conduct of the king of the Amorites, a certain Ḫani was entrusted with the mission of restoring order

on the Northern frontiers of Canaan, a task he is to accomplish probably on his way, as envoy, to Mitani. His credentials are in our possession. They are addressed to Aziru and contain an indictment against him. He is asked to give an account of his conduct towards the governor of Byblos and is commanded to make him restitution. Why has he paid no attention to the complaints which he has received against oppression and banishment, and why has he not acquainted the king with these things? why has he not handed over to justice the king's prisoners and other dangerous persons? Let him make haste and send them to Egypt, as he has already been summoned to do. The letter continues: "You are unfaithful to your king!" and he is threatened with severe punishment: he himself, his city and all those belonging to him shall be burnt by fire and none shall be spared. But if he will obey, then the king is inclined to forgive him and he will have patience for a year longer, but after that it will be too late. During the course of that year both he and his son, or at least his son, must come into the king's presence to justify themselves. And then the letter concludes with rather solemn protestations: "The king is in safety, as is the sun in heaven. From sunrise to sunset he reigns with his soldiers and his arms."

But Aziru is not alarmed by these big words; hitherto he had seen but few of the king's brave soldiers and his numerous chariots and he felt but little inclined to walk straight into the lion's den.

He makes all sorts of excuses: principally that he cannot leave the country now that the king of the Ḫatti has penetrated as far as the land of Aram and is threatening Tunip. That this was true and that Tunip had really been taken by the king of Ḫatti and re-taken by Aziru, we know. When therefore Ḫâni was sent there again, he is met by Aziru's brothers—Aziru himself remaining carefully in the background; and although he meets Ḫâni on his return to Egypt and supplies him plentifully for the journey, still he does not accompany him. He need not to fear punishment; the powerlessness of the Egyptian king was apparent and the reign of Egypt was speedily coming to an end.

This was quite clear, too, in Canaan proper, where the political outlook in no way differed from that in the North. We become acquainted with these facts through some four or five letters, which soon called for attention. And no wonder, for they came from Jerusalem, an ancient Canaanite city, already known in those days by the name of Urušalimê ("the city of salvation" or "the city of the God Salim," but the determinative before god is missing). At that time the governor there was a man of exceptionally high rank, a certain Abdi-ḫíbu (Arad-ḫíbu, also Arad-gíbu, possibly Abdi-tabu) who had succeeded his father but was appointed by the king. In spite of his being continually maligned and held up as a traitor at court, he never ceases to send assurances of loyalty, although obliged to acknowledge mistakes

occasionally made by his own troops or his mercenaries. But he is not able to stem the current of the growing stream, nor can he turn it aside. A great source of alarm is the invasion of a strange tribe, the Ḫabiri; they were following the usual war path, pushing on from the North of Jerusalem to the South-West, receiving assistance of food and troops from certain Canaanite cities; they were within easy distance of Jerusalem and had taken possession of the whole district. The capital was the only free town, "but as a bird in its cage, so am I shut up in it." Your governors are either dead or unfaithful, he says to the king; your country is lost. Speedy help alone can save us; but it seems hopeless to expect it.

Was Jerusalem helped out of her perilous situation? That question is of less importance to us than this one: Who were these Ḫabiri? The name signifies: allies, confederates, say some, but the writing makes this explanation impossible. The Hebrews, say others, a suggestion against which from a linguistic standpoint much cannot be alleged. Other suppositions rest on weaker grounds. Were it permissible really to look upon these conquerors as Hebrews, then the letters written from Jerusalem throw a marvellous light upon the Conquest of Canaan. All experts are agreed that it was of slow birth; but that it should have begun so early, under the 18th Egyptian dynasty, nobody had ever imagined. Still, the identification between Ḫabiri and Hebrews is not

yet established and in any case it would be imprudent and premature to raise on such uncertain ground a historical foundation of so important a nature. But what is undeniable and what cannot be explained or conjured away by any sort of trickery, is the fact that Aziru speaks twice in one of his letters from Tunip of the soldiers of Juda or the men of Juda, whom he has driven out of the city according to the king's orders. This fact is in itself noteworthy and at the same time a basis for the other hypothesis.

In analysing what is presented to us in the El-Amarna documents respecting the political aspect of Western Asia under the two last kings—Amenothes III and Amenothes IV—we find that during the reign of the father, Egypt was rich and powerful, in a position to uphold her rank amongst the powers and make herself obeyed at home; feared, yet esteemed by her enemies; at peace with her neighbours, and respected by her vassals; during the son's reign, we find on the contrary a penurious and wavering administration, powerless to subdue the frequently recurring insurrections or to keep the enemy at bay: in a word, the country is in a state of decay. As regards the cause of this rapid change, we need not remain in uncertainty. It is true, the letters do not throw any new light upon the subject, but they agree perfectly with what we know from many other sources.

Amenothes IV is no stranger to us; while still a prince he had entered the priesthood of On of

Heliopolis and it may have been in those days that he became imbued with his strong hatred and jealousy of the powerful Theban popes, the priests of Amun-Rê; he had conceived a fanatical reverence for the Heliopolitan Sun-god, Atin-Rê, who revealed himself to men in the disk of the sun. He was no sooner seated on the throne than he made every effort to place the worship of this god next to that of Amun at Thebes and finally proclaimed him the one and sole god over the whole of Egypt. Thebes ceased to be the princely residence, a new city, Ḫu-t-atin, was built, where the ruins of El-Amarna now lie; the worship of Amun and all other gods was abolished; the priests and all those who remained faithful to the worship of any god but the sun, were persecuted; the name of Amun was effaced from all places and even the name of the king, Amunhotep, was changed into Ḫu-n-atin, "light of the Sun." The history of his unsuccessful reform—unsuccessful, because it died with him and only served to call forth a powerful re-action and to increase the strength and pride of the priests of Amun—, is of vast importance for the study of religious worship. What can be more striking than the contrast between the unlimited number of Egyptian gods, surrounded by trickery, idolatry and sorcery and a religion having for its object a god, not represented by the image of man or beast, but only by a symbol of light and honoured with incense, flowers and hymns?

But we cannot enlarge upon that now. I simply

refer to it to explain how the kingdom founded and added to by the Thutmes and Amenothes came to such an untimely end. It was not because Ḫunatin wanted to establish a purer religion—had he appeared as its prophet and been able to inspire enthusiasm for it in the hearts of his subjects, it would have led then to great and worthy actions; but he tried to impose upon a people unfit for it a new worship and this he did in his capacity of absolute king and by means of violence. Such an unreasonable fanatic—for we cannot call him a reformer—was in every way unsuited to govern a country divided by jealous factions and now further encumbered by seditious provinces and unwilling vassals. But what did he care for such worldly things? How could he, accustomed as he was to let his thoughts wander into other spheres, take any interest in the concerns of quarrelling princes and fault-finding governors, who were always clamouring for more gold and for more soldiers? How could he inquire into the quality of the gold sent in payment for the goods received from Asia? He is not a merchant like his brother in Babylon. He is perfectly satisfied with the produce of his own country—let the people of Babylon be equally content with the necessaries, which they are in no way obliged to forego in their own country. It is almost surprising that with such a prince on the throne, Egypt should not have fallen into utter decay, if we had no reason to suppose that a kind of grand-vizir, Ḫoremḫebi, was

carrying on the work of the government in the king's lifetime. This dignitary, who had begun as a worshipper of Atin-Rê was, after a short period of disorder, during which time the sons-in-law of Hu-n-atin governed, anointed king by the priests of Amun and from that time forth he became the protector of the country's ancient form of worship. You can see a very fine bas-relief of him in our Museum of Antiquities, where he is represented as receiving in his sovereign's name the homage and the offerings of the Asiatic vassals and allied kings entrusted to their envoys.

Allow me after this short survey of the political situation, which is presented to us in the El-Amarna letters, just to draw your attention for a few moments to the state of religion in those days in Western Asia. They also supply abundant material for the history of civilization, but I should detain you too long, were I to dwell on that subject. Out of so much matter, deserving our attention, I will only make one or two remarks concerning the character of the different tribes.

I take the Canaanites to begin with. Perhaps as regards worldly progress they may have stood comparatively high—though in this respect they were but the imitators of their Eastern neighbours. Still their customs were rough and barbarous. Civil wars, robbery and plunder were the order of the day. Embassies, even those from powerful princes, were detained, the envoys

imprisoned and most shamefully mutilated and their property either partly or wholly confiscated. When we read about Shumadda of Accho who ordered that one of the followers of the Babylonian king should have his feet cut off, we are reminded of the account in the Book of Judges, of the Canaanite king Adoni-Bezek who commanded 70 conquered kings to have their thumbs and their great toes cut off and to whom the Israelites applied the "eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" doctrine. This horrible deed does not appear to have been the only one of its kind, but was evidently a national custom of which they boasted and which was unfortunately followed up by the children of Israel. We cannot deny that coupled with this ferocity was a certain amount of shrewdness and a love of liberty which must have made the yoke of bondage heavy to bear.

The Egyptian on the other hand was more polished, inclined to an exaggerated degree of courtliness, proud as a Spaniard and deeply imbued with the divine power of kings; on various occasions we see the slavish terms in which the governors are made to address the king. Some were a little less emphatic than others. Perhaps it came more natural to the Egyptians than to the uncouth Semitics; yet there were amongst these some who were not sparing of flattering words. Abimilki of Tyre is quite an adept in this art. Listen how he begins one of his letters: "I throw myself at the feet of the king, my master, seven times seven, I am but dust beneath the feet

of my king, my Lord, the Sun, who, in compliance with the wish of the Sun-god, his father, shines forth daily over the world and brightens it by his presence and makes all countries rejoice and live in peace; whose voice is heard in the heavens as that of the god of thunder and all nations are paralysed with fear when they hear his voice." Not quite so prolix but more delicately flattering is the Egyptian Jabitiri, who had been governor of Gaza and Joppa and who now held a command in the army; he writes: "I look here, and I look there, and all is dark; I look at my king and master and it is light. A stone whereon I place my foot might move, but I will not move if your feet tread on me." Small wonder that these courtly gentlemen did not find themselves at ease under the rough and clownish Canaanite princes. They longed for their own sunny land. The governor to whom we have just referred is quite willing to give up his grand appointment in order to be near his king and a servant at his court and he begs the Pharaoh to recall him. It was not in the nature of the Egyptians to establish a lasting government; they could conquer uncivilized African tribes and were able in self-defence to keep the Semites of Asia in check; but this was only done by very great exertion and was of no long duration. When they renewed their efforts a few centuries later, one lost battle sufficed to make them lose heart at once and for ever. The "regere imperio

populos" was not their gift. How very differently the Romans of Asia the Assyrians acted!

As regards the religious situation in Western Asia at the time of these letters we learn nothing new; the only god, whose name sounds unfamiliar, is not really a new one and it is not for the first time that we hear of him.

It is most remarkable that the term "ilâni" is used in the plural for "god," as the Israelites in later times employed Elohim, so that the expression can no longer be considered to imply that they formerly had several gods.

As might be expected, further testimony is given here that every town, every tribe, every large province had its protecting god, who might not be neglected or carried away without exposing the town or country to all sorts of terrible calamities; while none but the inhabitants of the city were called upon to worship him, yet strangers were compelled to yield him respect. Although a subject of Egypt, still one remained true to one's own god. Every now and then some king or governor ventured through courtesy to enquire after Amun, the great god of Thebes, of course not in letters to Amenothes IV, but they were always careful to add: "ilu šabrŭ aḫiya," the god creator, or rather "origin" of my brother's life. In return they demanded respect for the Asiatic gods, which were sent to Egypt with Babylonian or Mitanian princesses.

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"I acknowledge that Ishtar of Nineveh is one of my gods and not one of my brother's," thus writes Tushratta to Amenothes, but he does not wish her to be neglected.

We must not infer from this deep-rooted idea of antiquity, that the religions of Western Asia especially were originally nothing but a disjointed plurality of local worships. This is now the accepted theory in the face of which all others are denied existence; but though it contains an unmistakable and oftentimes mistaken truth, it is one-sided, because it loses sight of other undeniable facts. No doubt particularism was to be met with in all ancient religions but it found its corrective in an other theory which is not, as alleged, the fruit of syncretistic speculation of the time of Hellenism, but which dates very far back and of which these documents give proof. I do not allude to the fact that they often removed the local gods from one town to another, as they did in the case of Ishtar of Nineveh, the patron goddess of the Mitanian princess, and that they compelled certain towns, such as Tunip and Ḳatna (probably Cana in Galilee) to accept the worship of the sun-god of Egypt. This was done from purely political motives and in the latter instance in order to place, as it were, the king's seal upon the city and have it recognized as his territory. It was precisely with this object in view that the king of the Ḫatti removed this god from Ḳatna and thus became possessed of the city, and that the governor Akizzi

besought the king of Ègypt to send him a high ransom that he might have the god restored and by this means have his right over Ḳatna acknowledged. I mean something else, the universal worship of the same deity under different titles by all the Semitic tribes, while all were fully conscious that this god was one and the same although spoken of by other names and worshipped in various fashions. Not to speak of the wide-spread worship of Ishtar, we find two striking examples of this fact in our letters. First of all we have Shamash the sun-god, of whom it is positively stated that he was also the king's god, even if he did bear another name in Egypt. But especial mention must be made of the god of thunder. He bore different names, wherever he was worshipped, and that was over the whole of Western Asia, for Canaanites and Aramaeans invoked him, as well as Babylonians and Assyrians. According to his manifestations he was addressed as Hadad, the noisy shouter, Martu, the god of the West and the West-wind, perhaps also as Râmân, the angry roaring thunder-god, and so on. Notwithstanding the fact that he was spoken of as Teššub by the Nomads and the Mitanians and as Buriyaš by the Kassites and as something else by the Elamites, we know and the Babylonian lists of gods show that he was the same god. Our letters are not the only proofs of this, but they are additional ones. He may have been localised here and there, that is to say, he may have been chosen as patron god in certain parts, but

originally he did not belong to any particular place. He was the great, universal, national god of all the Western-Semites, the same to whom, under the name of Jahveh the Mosaic reformers, and probably even Moses himself,apply their pure ethical and religious ideas.

Gentlemen, I must conclude; it is more than time. One word more and I have done. Assyriology, the branch from which I have taken my subject to-day, is but an accessory to the studies which are my chief occupation. Still I have chosen it in order to give you a specimen of what it promises for ancient history and what it has already given to us. It is no longer in its first infancy, but it is yet very youthful. This is a great disadvantage for any science. Some students, whom the old wisdom bores, but fond of new things, expect all sorts of results and the solution of many problems from such a stripling among the sciences. In their great joy over such astounding discoveries, they beat the big drum, they ignore all that has been done before by scientists and think that nothing can equal this latest discovery. This results in putting out of temper the students of those sciences, which have attained maturity, and makes them unkindly disposed towards the new comer. What childish prattle, what unsteady steps, what funny little falls every now and then!

To both we wish a little more patience. To our friends we say: Let the little one grow up her own way and do not expect too much of her, just yet

awhile. To the less friendly inclined we say: do not look upon her as a rival who will try to oust you from your place, but as a powerful ally for the future in the great common work. When she has outgrown her childish habits and is somewhat more reasonable and careful, she will fill her place with honour beside her elder sisters.

Will Assyriology ever obtain a place among the branches of our higher education and have a properly appointed representative in our Universities, as she has in the chief foreign ones? I do not anticipate an early fulfilment of this wish.

But in Leyden we are not accustomed to wait for the law to do us justice. We can at all times find one in our midst who with a few followers is venturesome enough to strike out a new path. And here we have before us a rich and widespread province where treasures are to be had for the asking. Thousands of documents of all sorts, published and unpublished, interesting for the comparison of languages, for ancient history, especially for literature and arts and sciences, above all for mythology and religion, are waiting to be deciphered or invite to deeper examination. The harvest is far too heavy for the reapers. It would be a slur on our old School if we were to take no active interest in this work. It has always been her pride to maintain the good old traditions in honour and to stand by her well-tried methods; still she is not blind to the claims of these new times. Let us keep to what we have

secured, let us maintain carefully the inheritance of our fathers, but let us seek to increase it! Let us not neglect the old paths, but do not let us despise the new ones! Science is never at a standstill, he who does not want to be left ignominiously behind, must listen to her invariable command: "Onwards, always onwards!"

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